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A

Friendly Debate

Upon the next

ELECTIONS OF PARLIAMENT

And the Settlement of

Liberty of Conscience.

In a Dialogue between a City and Country

ELECTOR.

With Allowance.

Cit. MY worthy good Friend and old Acquaintance, this kind visit looks like some extraordinary Happiness intended us: Your good Company in *London* is an unexpected Favour, and requires a double Welcome.

Countryman. *Alas, my kind Friend, I am afraid I shall not merit half these Endearments and Caresses. He that would find a hearty Welcome, ought to bring Cheerfulness, gay Looks, and good Humour, to deserve it. But truly the Melancholy World is so dull, and Times so distracted, that we poor Country-Folks scarce know almost what Face to wear.*

Citizen. How, Friend, have we not Plenty, Peace, and all the Enjoyments of a National Happiness, that almost human Thought can frame, or Heart can wish, and yet can we talk of Melancholy and Distraction?

Coun. *'Tis true, that Plenty, Peace, and National Happiness we have indeed; but, alas! to the Eyes of all wise Men, they stand so tickliſh and tottering, like the Hieroglyphick of Fortune, on a Globe so rowling, that what we have so safe, as we fancy, to Day, we are not sure of possessing to Morrow.*

Cit. Alas! what waking Dreams are these that make you talk at this rate? what Opticks, if I may be so bold, are yours to take so wild and giddy a prospect of Dangers so Airy and Chimerical. Besides, by what Warrant or Commission dare you invade the peculiar Right of Providence, by so boldly and scrutinously prying into her Business of to Morrow?

Coun. *Invade the Right of Providence! No Friend, that very Providence, when it made Man the Lord of Reason, honour'd him with some further discerning Faculties then the rest of his Inferiour though Elder Brother Creatures,* viz. *with a Fore-sight and Consideration to look beyond to Day. I confess indeed, He that wilfully looks no further then his Nose, may walk on the Brink of a Precipice, and never see himself falling before he feels himself faln. And truly if that Foresight and Consideration be any where more particularly commendable in us, 'tis certainly in that critical juncture, where those two main concerns of Mankind our Religion and our Country are the object of our Speculation.*

Cit. Now I begin to find where abouts you are.

Coun. *And therefore under the confidence of our Affinity and Friendship, for once Ile venture to trust you with a part of my Soul, and let you know that I came to Town to the Signing and Sealing of a small Conveyance of Land I have bought, and that upon no common occasion of a Purchase.*

Cit. Before you oblige me with the knowledge of that extraordinary occasion of your Purchase, give me leave to remember you, how formerly I have heard you mightily exclaim against the buying of Land, you that, (you said) could turn and wind your Money to Forty or Fifty *per cent.* in Trade, and Merchandise, to bury it in Dirt and Clay, and scarce see Four *per cent.* for it.

Coun. *Why really, as you say, I have always had a very little affection for Purchases, but at present considering we are to have a* Parliament——

Cit. A Parliament! And what then?

Coun. *Why, to be free with a Friend, on that very account, as I told you before, I have a little present occasion for a small Purchase. Under the Rose thou knowest all my Estate lies in* Stock *and* Money, *and tho 'tis true, as I am an old stanch* Freeman, *and indeed an* Aldermans-Fellow, *I have my Voice in the* Corporation; *I have not one Ragg of Free-hold to vote for a* Knight of the Shire, *and so am resolved to buy a small Pitle of Land on purpose to equip me for an Elector.*

Cit. Why, how now Friend! buy an Estate for no other cause but the meer vanity of a Vote for a Parliament Man: Was ever such an Extravagance?

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Coun. Vanity *and* Extravagance! *Well, you may say your pleasure; but if your Eyes were open, I am sure you would never talk at this rate. Do you not see how matters are likely to be carried? what struggling and tugging here is. I need say no more, Can an honest* Free-born English Man, *and a* Son *of the* Church *be too Zealous, or do too much for his* Country *and his* Religion? *Does not our* All *lye at stake?*

Cit. Lye at stake said you! Prethee what Magick works in thy Head, that all these Fantoms dance there?

Coun. *Nay Friend, no* Bantring, *no* Jesting *in so serious a matter, for between Friends, its no just drolling Business. For my part I must confess, I am not easily misled, nor Bugbeared by every whimsical Notion, into idle Fears and Jealousies. No, no; I have too much sense to be frighted with* Shadows. *But, alas! where* visible Demonstration *speaks, 'tis then past Fearing.* The Test *and* Penal Laws *to be taken off, and* Popery *come in full rush upon us!* Lord have Mercy upon *England, I say.*

Cit. Popery coming in full rush upon us! say you? Nay then, old Acquaintance, I find you in a desparate Condition; the *Epidemical Disease* is so far gone with you, that 'twill be no little matter to make a Cure upon you. Prethee, if the *Penal Laws* and *Tests* were dissolved, why must the *Church of England* be so inevitably lost, and *Popery* so certainly over-run us? Where, I pray, lies the danger of this miraculous Deluge?

Coun. Miraculous! *Not so miraculous neither; for when our Damms are all broken down, the Inundation follows a course, and so no such great piece of Wonderment.*

Cit. Fair and softly: One sober Word by the way. You are running away so fast with the Cause, that 'tis hard to keep pace with you. Pray have you heard the *Kings Declaration* read?

Coun. *Heard it read! I marry, over and over again: But I thank God not in our* Parish Church; *No, to his Glory be it spoken, our* Parson, *Heaven be praised, had more Grace in him.*

Cit. So, we shall have it home by and by.

Coun. *Have it, ay, and a* Comment *upon it too, if you have leisure to hear it; for I bless Heaven I am Master of a little Sence my self, and to make up my own wants I have Conversed with so many wiser Heads then my own, that, no disparagement, what between their Brains and my own together, I can talk as much to the purpose upon the very* Heart *and* Soul *of that* Declaration, *as most Men that live within the sound of an* Organ.

Cit. Well Friend, I find which way your Inclination lies, and which way your Votes are resolved to be bestowed in this Election, and therefore, as an old confident of yours, I beg the freedom of an hour or two's Chat upon that Subject.

Coun. *A little friendly Dispute I suppose you mean.*

Cit. Ay, that's my Intention!

Coun. *With all my Heart: But hark you, before we begin, what Religion are you of?*

Cit. The Protestant Religion.

Coun. *Ay, but which of the Protestants?*

Cit. Which of them! why, a *Church* of *England Protestant.* But why do you ask me that Question.

Coun. *Onely, because by your manner of correcting me all along I was almost afraid I should have found you one of our new Apostates. For let me tell you, this is a Dangerous* seducing Town *you live in.*

Cit. No, Friend, to assure you to the contrary, I am almost as firm and unshaken in the Principles of my Religion, as I believe are the very Pillars of that Truth which my Religion is built upon. In short, I am a true *Orthodox Son* of the Establisht *Mother Church* of our Nation, and I trust in Heaven shall live and dye so; and for a farther distinguishing Qualification, I am one that Honour my *King* next to my *God*, and Reverence my *Liturgy* next to my *Bible.*

Coun. *Nay then, I find our Dispute will soon be at an end. For when I shall tell you what Honest, Worthy, Substantial, Unbribed, Unbyast, True* English men *I have fixt my Vote for; and withal give you those invincible Reasons for my Choice, a Choice in which every free-born Subject of the true* Apostolick Church *is so much obliged to applaud me for, and joyn and concur with me in, our Controversie will soon be dispatcht. For if you are that* Orthodox Protestant *you profess your self, 'tis impossible we should long disagree; if you are of my* Church, *I am sure you will soon be of my* Mind.

Cit. How, Friend, because we are both of *one Church*, therefore we must both be of *one Mind*? If this be one of your Consequences, and I find you no better at the rest of your Arguments, I am sure the Dispute (as you say) will be soon at an end indeed. Alas, my Friend, the being of one Church, is so far from making Men of one Mind, that for example, I have known one Man of that violent hot Church constitution, as to have Rotted a poor *Dissenter* in a Jayle; and a Cooler-zealed Neighbour of his own very Church, allow the poor Widow, his Wife, and his Children Bread to keep them from starving after it. Diversity of *Minds*, ay, more then of Complexions: I am sure there are some Men that dare not onely Preach *Non-resistance* (though by the by a little *out of fashion*-Doctrine at present) but practise it too: and if occasion call'd, go to Stakes or Scaffolds to assert it: and others, on the other side, that instead of going to either, shall sooner take a Western Journey, well mounted, to *Lyme* or *Philipsnorton*, and yet both of the same Church. Alas, mistaken Friend, you shall find the Church Walls as comprehensive as *Jacob* and *Labans* Sheep-fold, when even in the very same Flock you shall have the *White*, the *Black*, the *Mottled*, and the *Pyebald*, and what not! Different Minds, and yet of one Church: Yes, to go a little farther with you, there may be so much difference between them as between *North* and *South*; ay, and if possible as between even *Ecclesiastical Polity*, and *Ecclesiastical Divinity*; nay, and to raise the *Climax* one round higher yet, as much, as between the very Laws of God for *Feeding the Flock*, and the Laws of Man for *Goaling* and *Gibbetting them.* And therefore I am of opinion, Relation of mine, we shall not so easily jump, as you think for; and though indeed we may unite in one *Center*-point, one *Church*, possibly our *Out-Lines* may widen to the very *Poles*; and the Choice of your Parliament Men run so little parallel with mine, that the Contest between us will not so hastily be adjusted as you imagine.

Count. *Then Friend, if we are like to have so hard a Tug of it, 'tis time we fall on, and so pray begin with your* Declaration.

Cit.

Cit. First then, his gracious Majesty expresses his earnest desire of uniting his People to him, as well by Inclination as Duty; and as the only means to win the universal Affection of his People, he offers them the adding the free Liberty of every Mans Religion, to the full possession of their civil Rights and Properties: The reasons moving him to the Establishment of this Religious freedom, are not only his own constant Opinion, that the Government of Conscience is the Province of God, and not to be constrained by Man; but also his long Observation of the miscarriages of the late Raigns in point of restraint of Conscience; and how ineffectual these *Penal Laws* have always proved, as having never attained the end they were designed for, having on the contrary only served to foment Animosities, to spoil Trade, discourage Strangers, and depopulate Countries. And therefore for the universal Benefit of Mankind, and the common Tranquility of the Nation, His Majesty most graciously offers the Repeal of all those incentive Laws, and in exchange, to have a new *Charter* of Religious Liberty, Establisht on such just and equal foundations as shall render it **Unalterable**, and thereby give ease and happiness to all Men, and in so doing make his Kingdoms the Richest and most Flourishing in the World; the whole design of His Majesty herein being no other then the Honour of being the Founder of so lasting a Blessing; resolving farther so to divide and distribute his Favours, that all his Offices and Employments shall be the reward of Services, Fidelity and Merit; more particularly the *Church of England*, and all her Rites, Priviledges, &c. are not at all to be invaded by this Liberty, but all her Enjoyments, her Government, Administration and all her Possessions whatever, to be equally included in the same Religious *Charter*, and for ever secured on the same unalterable unshaken Basis.

Coun. *Concisely and Compendiously done*; *so here have you given the full contents of the* Declaration, *and now listen to a few of my Observations upon it.* First, *we have a good and gracious* King, *Heaven bless him, and send him long to Raign*; *and possibly a a Prince so Honourable, that he may mean as Candidly and Generously by us, as he promises in his* Declation——

Cit. **Possibly** so Honourable, and **may** mean as he promises; Oh, the monstrous Ingratitude of Jealousie! what returns are here, for such unparallel'd Royal Mercy and Goodness! a Prince of that unshaken unviolable Honour ——

Coun. *Why look you, Friend of mine, for once I beg your Pardon, I shall not stand with you for a civil word or two in the case of a* King, *and therefore to soften it into a little smoother Language, for once I am content to acknowledg* ——

Cit. No, no; now I think on't better, never strain complaisance for the matter, but e'en dress thy rude Fears in their rudest form, and pour out the bottom of thy Thoughts, and the very dregs of thy Soul, that I may have the fairer hold to shame thee into Sence and Reason.

Coun. *Well, as I was going to say, we will grant the* King *intends nothing less then the performance of his promise: but who knows what Popish Counsellours, Time and the advantage of the Repeal of these Laws, (our only Bulwarks) may work upon him; or put the case Himself stands immoveable against such Temptations, and that His own unshaken Sincerity shall be our Guard against all danger as long as please God He lives to Govern us*; *what security have we from His Successors? nay, suppose them all of as Honourable Principles as His Majesty himself*; *perhaps they'l lie not under half His present Majesties obligation, have no occasion of making any such solemn* Profession *of protecting the* Church of England, *no such reiterated* Engagements *of that endearing* Paternal Care *to defend her in all her Rights*, &c. *And consequently have no such extraordinary* Honour *to flye in their faces upon their deserting Her: And when these Ramparts, the* Penal Laws *and* Test *are broken down, what hinders all the Instruments of Rome, and Engines of* Mischief *from doing e'en what they please with us. And ought not we, think you, to be as heartily zealous and as truly solicitous for the protection of our Religion for the sake of our* Posterity, *as for our* own.

Secondly, *as the wisdom of our Ancestors establisht all these Laws for the support of our Church, and so eminent a part of them have stood whole* Ages; *Is it not* Impudence *in us to pretend to be* wiser *then all our fore-Fathers, by ruining so sacred a Fabrick, raised for so* great *and* glorious *a Cause, and so leaving our selves open and unguarded to the Spoil and Ravage of our Enemies*; *and farther, in so doing, undoubtedly to lose and forfeit, at least undeserve the very Protection of Providence, by voluntarily quitting the* Just *and* Lawful *means of our own* Safety.

Thirdly, *Make the very best of the* Declaration: *We have these Laws already for the upholding of our Church, which* Time *and long* Experience *have convinced us are, have been, and will be her sure and strong Defence, and therefore what* Folly *and* Imprudence *will it be in us (if no worse) to part with our present Laws, in exchange for others, which we cannot be sure will prove as strong as these we have already*; *and so in fine, what Reason have we to induce us to an Election of any other Representatives, then such who as true* Champions *of our Church, and faithful* Patriots *of our Country, shall rather stand by the* known *Supporters we have already, then trust to the* Hazard *and* Uncertainty *of new ones.*

Cit. Well, Friend, these are the *Bugbears* that your own and the rest of our popular Fears have mustered up, to fright the World from joyning with His Majesty in so sacred a Work, as the erecting those *Eternal Pillars* of *Peace, Unity* and *Concord*, proposed in so *Pacifick* a Foundation of *Happiness.*

Coun. Bugbears, *say you! no, Friend, give e'm their true names, the dangerous Clouds that will certainly hang over our Heads, and as certainly sooner or later break out into* Storms, *when these Laws, the only* Suns *to dispel them, are Dissolved: And the* Universal Pacification *you flatter your self with, only the manifest opening of the most notorious Inlet to all the Miseries a Protestant Kingdom can suffer.*

Cit. So, now you have shot your Bolt. And now to take your own method, and lay down the general Heads of my Security, in opposition against those of your Fears, take them in short as follows. And *First*, to your first and greatest clamour: These *Penal Laws* and *Tests*, I declare are so far from being those extraordinary *Bulwarks*, as you apprehend them, that when they shall be abrogated, and a new *Charter* of *Liberty* erected in their place, to-

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gether with those *Provisions* the *Parliamentary* Wisdom, shall or may *Annex* and *Incorporate* with that *Perpetual Law*, for the establishment of the Right, Properties, *&c.* of the national *Church of England*: The loosening of these *Penal and Tests Laws*, will, I say, be so far from an *Inlet* to *Popery*, that the *Romish Church* shall have more *Laws* to break through, more visible *English* free-born *Right* to destroy, and more notorious, more shameful and outragious *Arbitrary Power* to exercise (in whatever Raign such Attempts shall be made) to build it self upon the Downfal of the *Church of England*, then it has with all our present *Penal Laws* and *Test* Bulwarks in force.

Coun. *And all this you are sure you will prove!*

Cit. Yes, and so plain, that Confidence it self shall blush to deny it: And as to your second Argument, about the Presumption of our pretending to be wiser then our fore Fathers; if our *Mistaken* or *wilful* Ancestors, by any *misguided Zeal*, or whatever other *erronious Impulse* have founded Statutes for the intended defence of our *Protestant Religion*, that are in their own *Essence* and *Nature* a shame to Christianity it self, and a scandal to the very Church that pretends to borrow support from them; *Antiquity*, *Custom*, and other such *weaker Pleas* in their behalf are so little to the purpose, and we are so far from obliged to the continuance of such *unjust*, *unchristian* Laws, in tenderness forsooth to our Ancestors Reputation (a *Wild-Irish* sort of Civility in drawing with our Horses-tails, in complaisance to our Fathers before us) that on the contrary we shall rather *Forfeit* that Protection of Providence you mention, by the upholding of *Violence*, *Rapine* and *Injustice*, (for such are the Contents of those Laws) in so much that our neareſt and sureſt means to endear our selves and our Church to the Care of Heaven, and consequently derive *Ours*, and *Her* Preservation from that sacred Guardian of our Religion, must be by the Repeal, not the Continuance of these Laws.

Coun. *And all these positive Assertions you are confident you will prove unanswerable.*

Cit. As confident as undeniable Truth, and a good Cause can make me.

Coun. *Then let us resolve a Meeting, and try it out. And so Adieu for the present.*